

MEMORIAL

OF

INHABITANTS OF ST. MARY'S, GEORGIA,

*Against a change in the Collection Districts, and for an Increase of
Pay to Officers of the Customs of that State.*

APRIL 9, 1838.

Referred to the Committee on Commerce.

*To the honorable Senate and the House of Representatives of the United
States in Congress assembled :*

The memorial of the undersigned, citizens of St. Mary's, and county of
Camden,

RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH :

That your memorialists have learned, with much concern, that the Committee on Commerce appointed by your honorable body, to which was referred the "subject of regulating the compensation of custom-house officers," &c., have, in their report, proposed various modifications and amendments to the existing revenue laws, as well in recommending a change in the name and character of officers, as in their diminution; in the increase of the salaries of some, and in the reduction of the salaries of others; and, also, in the abolishing some of the collection districts, and annexing the ports and waters of the same to others, remote and extremely inconvenient, in many particulars, to the commercial interests of citizens, and injurious to the country in general.

The undersigned, it is true, can only speak in reference to the subject, so far as the port and collection district of St. Mary's, Georgia, is concerned, wherein the committee recommend this district to be abolished, and annexed to that of Brunswick.

The undersigned cannot believe that the gentlemen forming the committee could have had a correct knowledge of the waters of the two districts, or the extent of them; neither can the undersigned bring themselves to believe they were in possession of information of facts with regard to the localities of the port of Darien, (the residence of the collector for the Brunswick district,) or of the number of intermediate sounds and inlets intervening between Darien and St. Mary's, or the risks that boats and other craft frequently encounter by gales, in the distance between the two places—seventy-odd miles; or the committee, in the opinion of your memorialists, would never have come to the conclusion of recommending a consolidation of the two districts into one.

Thomas Allen, print.

It is true, that since the accession of the Floridas to the United States, the trade and commerce of the port of St. Mary's has diminished very much, and from various causes has advanced but little in improvement, although its office had before, say in 1807, '8, and '9, during the embargo and non-intercourse, and in 1812, '13, and '14, during the war with Great Britain, and again in 1817 and 1818, as the records of the Treasury Department will show, secured near a half million of dollars of revenue, and at periods, too, when much needed in sustaining the credit of the nation. But, recently, a spirit of enterprise and internal improvement has awakened her citizens to have intercourse and trade with the interior of the State. The citizens of Columbus, on the Chattahoochie, and the inhabitants of the intermediate country, desirous of opening communication with some port on the Atlantic from whence to ship their produce and import merchandise, and entertaining the opinion that the port of St. Mary's possesses superior advantages over either Darien or Brunswick, have cordially joined the citizens of St. Mary's, and, by mutual exertion, obtained an appropriation from our Legislature to cut out and open a road, which is now actually in progress, and will be completed in a very short time. Besides, a company of enterprising citizens have been incorporated, under the name and style of "St. Mary's and Columbus Railroad Company;" and, at the last session, a resolution passed that body authorizing the Governor to employ a competent engineer to make an examination of the country between the two points, and report as to the practicability of opening a canal or railroad, (as the case may be,) and make report to the next Legislature.

With such prospects, after such exertions made by our citizens, it would, indeed, be with much disappointment, nay, mortification, to learn that the plan proposed by the Committee on Commerce would meet the approbation of your honorable body.

Again: your memorialists would beg leave further to state, (now that the subject has been presented to your honorable body,) that, so far as the ports of Darien, Brunswick, and St. Mary's will bear a comparison, in a commercial point of view, in location, facility of entrance into the waters of vessels, and of their ingress and egress through them, the port and harbor of St. Mary's, with its tributaries, has decidedly the preference; and, so far as regards health, and materials for ship-building, a decided advantage.

The bar of St. Mary's, it is confidently asserted by coasting captains, (who, for years, have crossed in and out of the several inlets of St. Mary's, St. Andrew's, St. Simon's, and Sapelo,) has a decided advantage, being more easy of access, of equal depth of water, and, besides, more immediately in view of the ocean.

If economy be the motive that actuates the committee, then the undersigned would say, (with due deference to its opinion,) that, instead of producing diminution of expense within the district, an increase would be the consequence.

The present number of officers and men employed in the public service, for the district of St. Mary's, is but five, including the collector. If the plan as proposed be carried out, an open boat, or other vessel, with four hands and an officer, must be employed to guard the revenue, or else an extent of near one hundred miles of seacoast will be left exposed, and a

system for smuggling invited. These are truths not to be controverted; and if a doubt exists on the subject, your memorialists would respectfully invite an inquiry.

Upon the whole, your memorialists would respectfully recommend that no alteration take place with regard to the collection districts of the State of Georgia; that they be permitted to remain as they are; but if otherwise, that the salaries of the officers of the several collection districts in the State of Georgia may be increased, because of the reasons set forth by the Committee on Commerce, "that the principal compensation of the primary classes of officers of the customs has been dependent upon, and derived from, fees on entries, clearances, &c., and commissions on import and tonnage duties." Much of the latter (tonnage duties) by recent legislation being abolished, and by the very large reduction of duties, effected under late tariff acts, upon a great variety of goods, making some free of duty, and many classes approaching near to free goods, the amount of revenue in many districts, upon which revenue the compensation of collectors, &c., was nearly dependent, has been so reduced, without any corresponding diminution of collectors' duties, as to leave many officers without any thing like an adequate compensation for their services.

And your memorialists, as in duty bound, will pray, &c.